



Berrien County Health

Department:
Preventing Disease,
Prolonging Life and
Protecting the
Health of the
Community.



Preparing for Tornadoes

There is a direct connection between climate change and the health of our nation today. Children, the elderly, the poor, and people with chronic health conditions are most at risk for negative health impacts of climate change. Extreme weather (such as tornadoes, heat waves, rain, or hurricanes) caused by climate change increase the risk of death and disease.

- According to the National Weather Service, Michigan is among states most at risk for severe weather disasters such as thunderstorms, lightning, floods, lake effect weather, ice storms, heat waves and blizzards.

- Heat ranks among the top weather-related killers in the United States, responsible for more deaths than hurricanes, lightning, tornadoes and floods combined. Of the major American cities, New York, Chicago, Philadelphia, Detroit and St. Louis have experienced the most fatalities during recent heat waves.
- In 2006, the national Weather Service issued 10 Flash Flood Warnings and 38 Flood Warnings across the State of Michigan. There were no deaths or injuries from flooding, but the floods caused over \$2 million in economic and property damage.

- Carbon monoxide killed at least 14 people in Michigan in 2007.
- An average of 16 tornadoes occur in Michigan each year.

According to the Michigan Department of Community Health, 37 people in Michigan died due to the exposure to the cold in 2006.

Tornado Warning Signs:

- Dark, often greenish skies
- Wall cloud
- Large hail
- Loud roar; similar to a freight train

Tornadoes can strike anytime, anywhere, and more than once.

April is Recognizing Public Health Month

April is Recognizing Public Health month, and the Health Department has brought you articles about Public Health Accomplishments, Emergency Preparedness, Tornadoes and Other Disasters, and Opportunities for the Uninsured. For questions about any of these topics, call us at **926-7121**.

Preparing for a Tornado

- When there are thunderstorms in your area, turn on your radio or TV to get the latest emergency information from local authorities. Listen for announcements of a tornado WATCH or tornado WARNING.
- Learn about the tornado warning system of your county or locality. Most tornado-prone areas have a siren system.
- Take a few minutes with your family to develop a tornado emergency plan. Sketch a floor plan of where you live, or walk through each room and discuss where and how to seek shelter.
- Show a second way to exit from each room or area. If you need special equipment, mark where it is located.
- Ask an out-of-state relative or friend to be the "family contact" in case your family is separated during the tornado. Make sure everyone in your family knows the name, address and phone number of this contact person.
- Build a disaster supply kit.
- Learn the emergency dismissal policy for your child's school.
- Make sure your children know - - What a tornado is, what watches and warnings are, and what county or locality they live in.
- Buy a weather radio.

For more information, call the Health Department at **926-7121**

Local and National Resources Available:

- Michigan Prepares: <http://www.michigan.gov/prepare>
- Michigan Committee for Severe Weather Awareness: <http://mcswa.org/default.aspx>
- Michigan State Police: http://www.michigan.gov/msp/0,1607,7-123-1593_3507-57786--,00.html
- United States Government – Prepare for Severe Weather: <http://www.usa.gov/Topics/weather.shtml>
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: <http://www.bt.cdc.gov/disasters/>
- National Weather Service: <http://www.nws.noaa.gov/>



Where to seek shelter, wherever you are:

In a home: The basement offers the greatest safety. Seek shelter under sturdy furniture if possible. In homes without basements, take cover in the center part of the house, on the lowest floor, in a small room such as a closet or bathroom, or under sturdy furniture. Keep away from windows.

In a mobile home: The home should be evacuated, and shelter should be taken in a prearranged substantial shelter. If there is no shelter nearby, leave the trailer and lie flat in a ditch or ravine.

Protect your head by placing your arms over it. Do not take shelter under your home.

Driving a vehicle: Get out of the vehicle and take shelter in a nearby ditch or ravine; do not get under your vehicle. Lie flat with your arms over your head.

Tornado Watch vs Warning: A tornado **watch** means that there is a possibility of a tornado forming in the area. A tornado **warning** means that one has actually been spotted or noted on radar.

At Work or at School: Follow advanced plans to move to interior hallways or small rooms on the lowest floor. Avoid areas with glass and wide, freespan roofs. (Schools and businesses should designate someone to look out for severe weather and initiate an alarm.)

In open country: Lie in a gully, ditch, or low spot in the ground and hold onto something on the ground if possible. Do not seek shelter in damaged buildings, they may collapse completely.

Special thanks to John Nelson for his help with this article!

The Berrien County Health Department has five locations to serve you:

Benton Harbor 769 Pipestone P.O. Box 706 926-7121	M-139 Office 2106 S. M-139 927-5623	School Based 870 Colfax Ave 925-4500	Niles 1205 N. Front St. 684-2800	Three Oaks 21 N. Elm 756-2008
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Or visit us on the web at www.berriencohlthdept.org

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